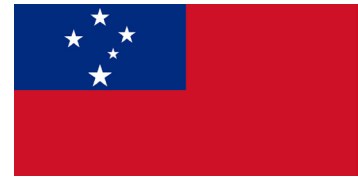




Assessing Inequalities in Registration of Births

Samoa (2024) CRVS Inequality Assessment Brief



A well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system helps ensure that every person has a legal identity, facilitating access to the benefits and protections provided by the State. Data collected by CRVS systems are critical for monitoring the health and well-being of the population, implementing policies and monitoring the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. However, disparities exist in the completeness of birth and death registration among marginalized and hard-to-reach populations. ESCAP initiated a project and developed guidelines for assessing inequalities in registration, which is critical to address disparities and ensure all persons are included in the CRVS system.

This brief summarizes findings from the inequality assessment [report](#) implemented by Samoan CRVS stakeholders, with technical support from ESCAP. Findings from this quantitative assessment can be used to inform future research and policy interventions, to bridge gaps in registration between different populations in the country.

Samoa's CRVS system

The main stakeholders in the Samoa CRVS system include the Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) Division within the Samoa Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Health (MoH). The Census, Survey and Demography (CSD) Division within SBS are responsible for the production of vital statistics based on the analysis of census and survey data.

BDM receives information about vital events from multiple departments and ministries, which are then entered into the digital Life Data System by BDM staff. MoH submits paper-based information on notifications of births and deaths from the main hospital, Moto'otua, on a monthly basis, in addition to notifications from district hospital logbooks, which are monitored on a less regular basis. The Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development reports home births and deaths in villages to BDM, and the Council of Churches provide baptism certificates which can be used for registration of births when children are born at home.

The BDM Division is responsible for registering vital events and providing birth, death, marriage and divorce certificates. However, a birth or death is only considered officially registered once a family member presents at the BDM registration office. According to the law, families have three months to register a birth without incurring a fee.

Methodology

This brief will focus on inequalities in birth registration, as it was not possible to analyze inequalities in death registration due to data availability and quality issues.

To assess inequalities in birth registration, administrative data was used to calculate the completeness of birth registration by different population sub-groups, using the number of registered births (by sub-group) from BDM Division as the numerator, divided by the estimated births (denominator) from the 2021 census data and UN World Population Prospects (UNWPP) estimates. The most recent Multiple Indicator



Get every one in the picture



Cluster Survey (MICS), 2019-20 was also used to estimate registration completeness by age, region, wealth quintile, religion, education level of the mother and household head, sex of household head and whether the mother and father were residing in the household with the child.

Key findings

Birth registration:

- **Birth registration completeness is lowest for children under age 1**, with only 41% registered by their first birthday. By age 5, registration rates increase to approximately 80% when children reach school enrollment age.
- **Regional disparities in birth registration** show that on the main island of Upolu, urban areas show higher birth registration rates, which decrease with increasing distance from the registration office in Apia. The Island of Savai'i has lower overall registration rates, ranging from 4% in Palauli 3 to 42% in Gagaemauga 2.
- **Children in the poorest wealth quintile have lower birth registration rates** compared to children in wealthier households. By age 1, only 25% of the poorest children are registered, compared to 62% in the wealthiest households.
- **Mother's education level is positively correlated with birth registration** completeness by age 5. For children whose mothers have primary education, 54% have their birth registered, increasing to 74% when mothers have higher education.
- **Minimal inequalities in birth registration across other demographic characteristics** are observed. Registration rates show little disparity based on the household head's sex or education level, parental residence in the household, religion, child's disability status, mother's age or religion.

Policy Recommendations

- **Free registration and additional economic incentives** to help offset the transport and opportunity costs for poorer families and encourage timely registration.
- **Continue annual or mobile registration campaigns** by establishing temporary registration posts at local district hospitals for a few days each year.
- **Strengthen coordination with birthing centres and community birth attendants** to better support parents in the registration process.
- **Partner with organizations that service remote areas or poorer households**, village leaders, village women communities, and midwives, to increase awareness through targeted advocacy and registration campaigns.
- **Improve data accessibility** through strengthened partnerships between departments and ministries (essential for sharing disaggregated birth and death data).
- **Ensure that any future digital registration system is interoperable** and linked with the MoH system. When updating the birth registration software, consider which key variables should be gathered and ensure it can be linked with MoH systems to reduce the burden of registration on families.
- **Improve understanding of death registration completeness** once death data from MoH becomes available. Additionally, explore the addition of questions about death registration in household surveys (similar to birth registration questions in the MICS), to better understand whose deaths are not being registered.

